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Message Text

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15
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03

INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 SP-02

CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 AGR-05 IO-11 DODE-00

PA-01 PRS-01 /070 W
---------- 057302
R 050330Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6034
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CINCPAC

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E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS: EAGR, ENRG, LA
SUBJECT: NAM NGUM PHASE II: DEFORESTATION PROJECT

BANGKOK ALSO FOR RED

MANILA FOR USADB

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: 75 VIENTIANE 6347 (NOTAL)

1. LOCAL PAPER VIENTIANE MAI FEBRUARY 4 QUOTED ANNOUNCE-
MENT BY CHIEF OF FORESTRY SERVICE FOR VIENTIANE PROVINCE
VISITH SIVILAY, THAT WORK ON DEFORESTATION OF NAM NGUM
PHASE II BASIN HAS ALREADY BEGUN. ACCORDING TO VISITH
SIVILAY, 80 PEOPLE ARE NOW WORKING ON THIS PROJECT.
SIVILAY PREDICTED THAT BY WEEK OF FEBRUARY 9 ANOTHER
1,000 LABORERS WOULD ARRIVE TO CUT TREES AND STATED
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THAT THE ARMY WOULD FURNISH 2,000 ADDITIONAL MEN TO

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HELP WITH THIS PROJECT. VIENTIANE MAI NOTED THAT AUSTRALIA HAS COOPERATED IN PROJECT BY FURNISHING EQUIPMENT AND BY CONSTRUCTING 1,400 METERS OF ACCESS ROAD.

2. LAO OFFICIALS HAD ANNOUNCED IN NOVEMBER, 1975, THAT WORK WOULD BEGIN "SOON" ON THIS DEFORESTATION PROJECT AND THAT IT WOULD INVOLVE BETWEEN 2,000 AND 3,000 PEOPLE, SOME OF THEM TO BE PROVIDED BY THE ARMY. LAO AUTHORITIES AT THAT TIME EMPHASIZED THAT THEY WISHED TO AVOID LOSS OF REVENUE FROM TIMBER THAT OCCURRED WHEN NAM NGUM I BASIN WAS FLOODED WITHOUT DEFORESTATION (SEE REFTEL).

3. WE UNDERSTAND FROM AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT AUSTRALIAN FOESTRY EXPERTS IN LAOS UNDER COLOMBO PLAN WERE ASKED INFORMALLY TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN BUILDING ACCESS ROADS TO SITES OF DEFORESTATION AND COMPLIED BECAUSE THEY HAD EQUIPMENT AND EXPERTISE (AND LITTLE ELSE TO DO). THIS IS NOT PART OF FORMAL AUSTRALIAN PARTICIPATION IN NAM NGUM PHASE II PROJECT, WHICH IS BEING HANDLED THROUGH ADB CONTRACTS. AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF TOLD US LAO HAD APPROACHED SEVERAL FOREIGN EMBASSISES, INCLUDING JAPANESE, IN 1975 FOR ASSISTANCE IN DEFORESTATION PROJECT. JAPANESE AND OTHERS HAD ADVISED LAO AUTHORITIES THAT EQUIPMENT AND ROAD-BUILDING NECESSARY FOR MOST MODERN METHODS OF DEFORESTATION WOULD COST TOO MUCH, AND THAT LAO SHOULD INSTEAD USE "LABOR-INTENSIVE" METHOD TO GET OUT AS MANY TREES AS POSSIBLE. LAO APPEAR TO HAVE FOLLOWED THIS ADVICE. SO FAR AS WE KNOW, NO FOREIGN EXPERTS ARE SUPERVISING DEFORESTATION PROJECT.

4. AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF STATEED THAT LAO ARE NOW RECEIVING ASSISTANCE FROM EAST GERMAN EXPERTS IN PROJECT INVOLVING UNDERWATER CUTTING OR DREDGING OF TREES IN NAM NGUM PHASE I RESERVIOR. TREES UNDER WATER IN THIS BASIS ARE ROTTING AND LAO AUTHORITIES ARE REPORTEDLY CONCERNED THAT THIS WILL ADVERSELY AFFECT QUALITY OF WATER IN BASIN (WHICH CAN, OF COURSE, BE FILTERED) AND, MORE SERIOUSLY, BE HARMFUL TO FISH LIFE IN BASIN.
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ACCORDING TO EARLIER REPORTS, CHEMICAL ACTION OF ROTTING WOOD IN RESERVIOIR HAS ALREADY DAMAGED TURBINES AT NAM NGUM HYDRO PLANT.
CORCORAN

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